

THE CIA

The Kennedy Connection

One of the most often cited admirable acts of John Kennedy's presidency was the manly way he faced up to the humiliating rout of the CIA-backed troops that invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Offering no excuses, he took personal blame for the disaster even though he had inherited the plan from the Eisenhower Administration. But TIME has been told by credible sources that Kennedy did not accept the defeat all that gracefully. In anger, he and his brother Robert, then Attorney General, covertly ordered agencies of the U.S. Government to find some sure means of deposing Fidel Castro, Cuba's chief of state.

Whether or not assassination attempts against Castro were authorized by the Kennedys is still unclear. But they did send word to the CIA, at least, that he must be knocked out of power by

any means the agency could devise. Two obvious possibilities: fomenting political upheaval or plotting an assassination. Similarly, the State Department and possibly the FBI and the Pentagon were told that ways should be found to get rid of Castro. The CIA did work with two U.S. Mafia leaders, Sam Giancana and John Roselli, in unsuccessful attempts to kill the Cuban leader.

Possible Assassination. It is still unclear just how deeply the Kennedy connection is being investigated by the two groups that are probing the CIA: the Senate Intelligence Operations Committee chaired by Senator Frank Church and the commission headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. According to the Associated Press, the Rockefeller commission has acquired the minutes of a 1962 meeting attended by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, CIA Director John McCone and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy at which the possible assassination of Castro was discussed. Although the possibility was said to have been dismissed, a memo written two days later by an assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara asked the CIA to prepare contingency plans for killing Castro. It too reportedly was quickly rescinded.

After hearing testimony last week from the present CIA director, William Colby, Church said that "there were surprises... there was information that had not surfaced before." The Senator added that Colby had testified "to activity that he himself considered outside the law." Colby and his predecessors at CIA, including McCone, Richard Helms and James Schlesinger, have all publicly denied that the CIA had ever murdered a foreign head of state, but have not explicitly denied that any such attempts had been made. Asked about Colby's testimony, a visibly angry Church said that "it is simply intolerable that any agency of the Government of the United States may engage in murder." The implication was that Colby had conceded that assassinations had been at least discussed within the CIA. But how high in Government had such plans been considered? Replied Church: "We're exploring this aspect with great particularity."

If the committees do link the Kennedy brothers with the plots against Castro's life, as TIME sources have done, this may add impetus to demands for a renewed investigation of President Kennedy's death. No investigation has established that Lee Harvey Oswald had been in touch with any Cuban leaders

or could have been part of a retaliatory attack on Kennedy for the U.S. efforts to kill Castro. The significance of the Kennedy connection to anti-Castro plots is not that it strengthens the many Oswald conspiracy theories, but that it tends to knock down the notion that the CIA was operating wildly beyond presidential control in scheming against foreign leaders.

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CIA 1.01 Colby, William